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## RESEARCH REPORT

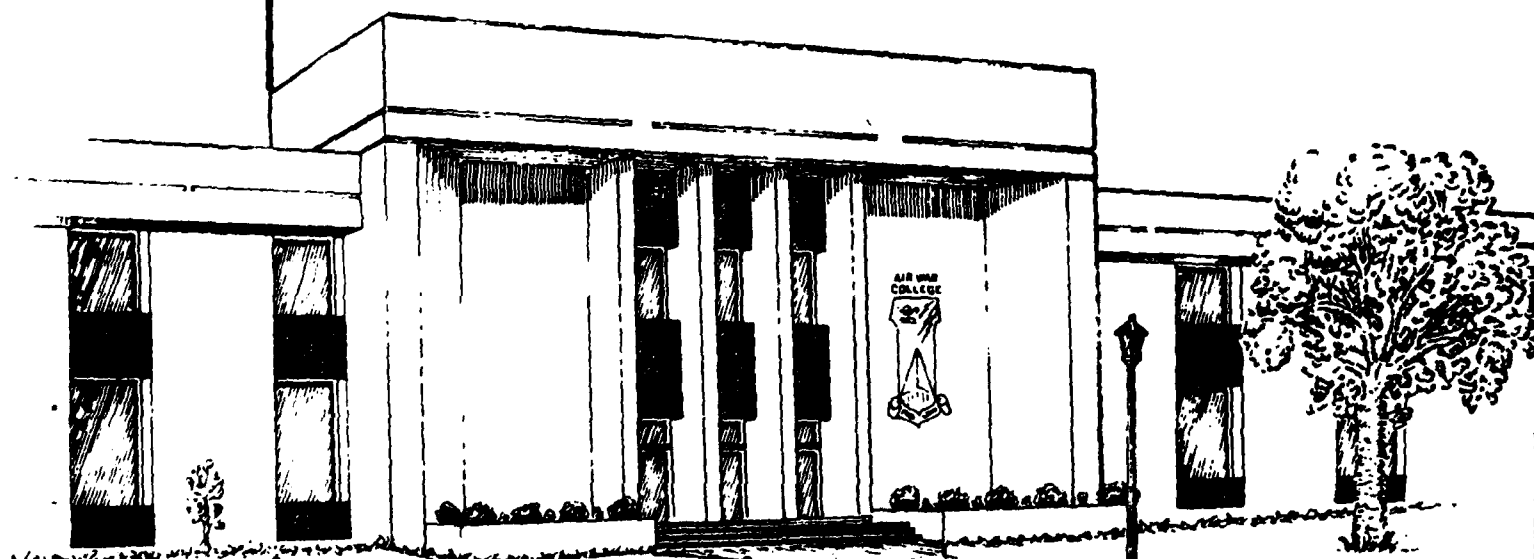
CENTRAL AMERICAN INSURGENT MOVEMENTS:  
IMPACT ON HONDURAN NATIONAL SECURITY

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CENTRAL AMERICAN INSURGENT MOVEMENTS:  
IMPACT ON HONDURAN NATIONAL SECURITY

by  
MARCO TULIO RIVERA  
Colonel Honduran Air Force

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT



Research Advisor: Lt. Colonel George M. Lauderbaugh

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

May, 1988

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** Insurgent Movements in Central America: Their Impact on Honduran National Security

**AUTHOR:** Marco Tulio Rivera, Colonel, Honduran Air Force

Explores the origins of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and the Farabundo Marti insurgent effort in El Salvador. Examines the Contra movement in opposition to the Sandinista Regime. Analyzes the impact that these conflicts are having on Honduras and what the potential threats are to Honduran National Security. Concludes that Honduras must improve its armed forces to counter potential threats from hostile governments in Nicaragua and El Salvador if that is an outcome of the war. Further highlights the need for disarming of Contras if they seek exile in Honduras. Suggests diplomatic action to handle refugee problems and to settle border disputes. Provides specific recommendations for modernization of the Honduran Armed Forces.

## ACKNOWLEDEGMENT

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my Faculty Advisor, Lt. Col. George M. Lauderbaugh for his assistance in completing this project. His editing and suggested revisions greatly improved the clarity of my writing. He also directed me to source materials and helped me organize my ideas for this thesis. I would also like to thank Major "Chip" Zimmer, computer genius, for help in publishing this document.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Marco T. Rivera is from Honduras and his career in his nation's Air Force spans over 30 years. He joined the Honduran Air Force in January, 1957 as a student of Aviation Mechanics. He graduated in 1962 and immediately entered the Honduran Air Force Academy. As part of his Academy training he was sent to Moody AFB, Ga. for T-28A undergraduate pilot training which he completed in 1964. He has held a variety of positions in his Air Force such as Instructor Pilot, Director of the Pilot Training School. As a senior officer he has held a number of key staff and command assignments. He has been Chief of the Department of Logistics, Planning and Programing, Personnel and most importantly, Chief of the Air Force General Staff. Colonel Rivera has attended a variety of professional schools. In addition to Air War College, he is a graduate of ACSC and the Inter-American Defense College, Washington D.C. Colonel Rivera flew 14 combat missions in the 1969 War between Honduras and El Salvador.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effects that different insurgent movements in Central America could have on the national security of Honduras. The Central American crisis has generated a great deal of debate among the nations of the Americas. The direct participants in this crisis are the Sandinista Regime in Nicaragua; The Contras who oppose the Sandinistas; El Salvador; and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement (FMLN) who oppose the current government of El Salvador. The United States has provided support to the Contras and to the moderate government of Jose N. Duarte, President of El Salvador. The Soviet Union and Cuba have provided military assistance to Sandinista Nicaragua and the FMLN.

Because of geography, Honduras has also been affected by this crisis. While there is currently no insurgent movement within Honduras, the violence of her neighbor's conflicts has caused concern for Honduran policy makers. The Contras, for example, could be a particularly difficult dilemma. The Honduran leadership is wary that the Contras may not either gain a military victory or political agreement with the Sandinistas. Thus, there is the possibility that the Contras could retreat into Honduras. Honduras is not eager to accept an armed force of perhaps 15,000 men over which it has no control. In addition,



the Nicaraguan Army might pursue the Contras and violate Honduran Sovereignty. Finally, Honduras simply does not have the economic resources to absorb an additional 15,000 refugees.

On the other hand, Honduras and El Salvador have a long standing border dispute. This dispute erupted into a brief war in 1969 and has not been resolved. (1:1) Honduras is not convinced that El Salvador does not still have designs for territorial expansion. Hence they are concerned that US military aid to El Salvador, intended to support Duarte in his struggle with the FMLN, could be used against Honduras in a future war. Honduras, while generally supportive of US policy does not want the military balance of power tipped in favor of her traditional rival.

This report attempts to examine these and other problems of Honduran National Security. In order to have a better understanding of the present crisis, a historical review of Nicaragua and El Salvador are presented. United States actions in the region are part of this review. The paper concludes with an analysis of the key questions that confront Honduran military and political leaders and provides possible solutions.

#### THE ORIGINS OF THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA

From 1937 until 1979 the government of Nicaragua was, essentially a family operation. The Somoza family effectively

came to power in 1933, when the patriarch, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, (Garcia was his Mothers name, the use of both parents names is common in Latin America) took command of the newly created National Guard (Guardia Nacional). Nicknamed "Tacho", Somoza was a favorite of the United States. The US hoped that the Guardia under Somoza's leadership would evolve into a professional and apolitical force that would stabilize the often turbulent and strife ridden nation. Stability was a definite outcome, however, Somoza was far from apolitical. He used the Guardia as his personal army and the power behind the National Liberal Party, which he founded. On January 1, 1937, he was inaugurated President. As he assumed his nation's top post, Somoza was virtually unchallenged as a political force in Nicaragua. It was rumored that he had eliminated his only real rival for power, Jose Augusto Sandino by ordering his assassination in 1934. (14: 109)

Once formally in office, Somoza quickly consolidated his power and refined the Latin American political tradition of continuismo, the process of staying in power by legal maneuvering. Known as Somocismo, this system had as its foundation the Guardia Nacional. Somoza maintained tight control of the force, appointed relatives to command it, expelled any who hinted at disloyalty, and gave it broad powers over customs, immigration and even the post office. Along with the power came corruption; bribery, extortion, and smuggling were regular

functions of the Guard. Thus, the professional, apolitical army that the United States had envisioned became a corporate entity devoted to its own preservation and enrichment.(14:109).

There were other aspects to Somocismo, besides its military power that enabled Tacho to remain in power. Key among these factors was support from the United States both real and perceived. Somoza visited with President Roosevelt, send his sons to US schools, including West Point, enthusiastically supported the US in World War II, and allowed the CIA to use the Managua Airport for its 1954 operation in Guatemala. All this would have been acceptable foreign policy, except Somoza used his American connections to quell dissent at home. It was widely accepted that it was fruitless to oppose a dictator in Latin America who had close ties to the US. (14:109)

Another technique that the elder Somoza used was co-option of the elite. In some cases he brought old enemies from the Conservative party into the Guardia. Such was the case of Luis Salazar, an former conservative, who became a Somoza crony. (6:25) Generally he convinced the elite that he alone could provide order and growth for the country. When these methods failed he used censorship and exile. He was careful to use a vieled glove when discipling the elite and reserved torture and brutality for the masses. (14:109-113)

Somoza's crafty leadership and political acumen paid off. By the early 1950's he was a rich man, owning 10% of the farmland

and controlling interests in all of Nicaraguas industry.(14:113)  
He had virtually total political control of the country and had co-opted or exiled his opponents. He had not however, eliminated all dissent, for on September 21, 1956 he was shot by Rigoberto Lopez Perez. He died five days later, leaving the reins of government in the hands of his two legitimate sons, Luis and Anastasio (Tachito) Somoza Debayle. (8:26)

Luis assumed the Presidency after his fathers death, command of the National Guard went to the younger Anastasio. Luis soon proved to be as politically shrewd as his father. He too courted the United States, and allowed a modicum of freedom for the elite opposition. It was his intention to establish a one party dictatorship, and allow the Presidency to be assumed by others while all the power remained in the family. His brother, on the other hand, placed all his faith in the National Guard and longed to be President in his own right. In 1967, Tachito became the third Somoza to assume the Presidency of Nicaragua. Self indulgent and venal, Tachito lacked the political skills of his father and elder brother. Moreover the mitigating presence and counsel of Luis was lost when he succumbed to a heart attack at age 44. In addition, to a change in leadership, Nicaragua was effected by the successful revolution of Fidel Castro in Cuba. Castro had demonstrated that there could be radical alternative to personalistic dictatorships, and that these alternatives could survive despite opposition from the US. (14:112.113)

Castro inspired but did not support the first organized armed opposition to the Somozas. Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a leading Conservative and publisher of the opposition newspaper, La Prensa, lead a small band of rebels into Nicaragua in 1959. Funding for the operation was provided by Venezuela. The effort was ineffective, resulted in the jailing of the intruders and failed to ignite an uprising among the people. (14:114)

Another group, the Sandinista Liberation Front, known by its Spanish acronym, FSLN, was founded by Carlos Fonseca Amador, Tomas Borge Martinez, and Silvio Mayorga. They began guerrilla operations in 1962, but were no match for the National Guard. By 1967, Somoza declared that the band no longer existed. The Sandinistas early political program was vague. Their main goal was the removal of Somocismo. Despite their lack of military success, The Sandinistas gained support, not from the masses but the Catholic Church and university students. (14:114)

At the beginning of the 70's, Tachito remained firmly in control of his Empire. Outwardly Nicaragua appeared to be prosperous, she had gone through 20 years of economic growth. The growth, however had not changed the life of the majority of nation. Social conditions were abysmal. Over half the population remained illiterate, disease rates were high, mal nutrition and inadequate housing were the norm. Never the less Somoza appeared to be in no danger of losing his feifdom. The catalyst that, led to his ultimate demise was an act of God: an earthquake that

devastated Managua and killed over 10,000 people. Somoza reassumed direct control of the country on the pretense that he would direct the relief effort. Instead of relief, he and the National Guard raked off as much as they could from the international aid. Nicaraguans from all classes were outraged by this blatant greed. The quake and more importantly, Somozas handling of it, broadened the opposition. The Sandinistas were no longer a band of radicals, they had gained wide support and respectability. (14:114)

Emboldened by their increased support the Sandinistas intensified their military activities. They pulled off a spectacular raid of a Christmas party in 1974 and collected one million dollars in ransom. Later they held the Congress captive and made a spectacular exit, also with ransom. More important than these successes were the political gains the movement achieved. By 1978 they had gained the support of the middle class, especially the business community. This broader support gave the Sandinistas legitimacy and increased international support. (14:115)

Another event that greatly assisted the Sandinista cause was the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976. Carter's program of Human Rights and his desire for a fresh start in Latin America as exemplified by the Panama Canal Treaties brought him in direct conflict with Somoza. When the National Guard reacted to violence of the Sandinistas with like violence the Carter

Administration was quick to condemn it. Eventually military aid was curtailed and the Guard for the first time in its history could not maintain order. (14:116)

In 1979, Somoza or one of his lieutenants made a critical blunder when Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the long time conservative opposition leader and respected newspaper publisher was murdered. It was the last straw, the masses joined the Sandinistas, Somoza abandoned his Army and went into exile. Without Somoza the Guard collapsed and the Sandinistas marched triumphantly to power. (13:25)

#### THE SANDINISTAS AND THE MILITARIZATION OF NICARAGUA

On the surface, the Sandinista victory in 1979 looked like a positive outcome for Central America. A hated dictator had been eliminated and replaced by a broad based coalition. The US had assisted in the down fall of a loyal right wing strongman, something that it had never done before. Many thought a new relationship based on US actions would occur. This heady optimism soon turned sour as the coalition quickly dissolved. All the hopes that the Revolutionary government would live up to its promises were soon dashed. The nine member directorate was soon reduced to six. The defection of Violeta Chamorro, widow of Pedro could have been expected. After all, the Chamorros represented the Conservative faction. However, the departure of

Eden Pastora, the legendary Comandante Zero, and an original Sandinista was an indication that a radical clique of Marxist-Leninists were assuming all the power. (5:204)

In addition to purging the moderate groups, the new Sandinista Regime began to arm Nicaragua at an unprecedented rate. The source of their military largess has been the Soviet Union and Cuba. For example, the Soviet Bloc has provided 15.85 billion dollars in economic and military aid in the period 1983-85. This aid has resulted in an impressive array of both equipment and combat forces. After only eighteen months in power, the Sandinista army had become the largest in Central America with 40,000 regular troops. Today that army exceeds 75,000 with an additional 44,000 trained militia. Comparative figures are: El Salvador, 49,000; Guatemala 43,000; Honduras 22,000 and Costa Rica, 8,000. The army is also well trained, over 6,500 Cuban Military Advisers have seen to that. The armored force now has over 350 tanks, Somoza had only 28 and the rest of Central America has only 200. Likewise, the transportation and artillery branches have been modernized. The Sandinista Air Force has concentrated on upgrading its helicopter assets, The chief acquisition has been six M-24 Hinds, known as the flying tank. (7:4,19,20,21,23)

The Sandinista government defends this build up with two arguments. The first is that the forces are needed to defeat the Contras, the anti Sandinista insurgents that the Reagan



Administration calls freedom fighters. The second justification is that the forces are needed to prevent an invasion by the United States. They are quick to point out that the US toppled the Arbenz government of Guatemala in 1954, attempted to oust Fidel Castro at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, and intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1965. In addition they assert that they have no dispute with neighbors and thus should not be feared.

Nicaragua's neighbors contend that the build up is disproportionate to the threat. They fear that once the Contras are subdued this military machine will be used against them , or to support revolutionary forces within their borders. In fact, the Sandinistas have made threats. On September 9, 1983, the Sandinista Minister of Foreign Affairs, at a meeting of the Contadora group declared: "We will support guerilla movements that may form in Honduras. Our army is ready to cross the borders of Honduras and Costa Rica, and El Salvador is our badge. We will extend the war from Guatemala to Panama." (16:123) He further expressed to the media that if the Contadora group could not solve the problem in Central America in a peaceful way, the Sandinistas would have no other alternative but to declare war on Honduras. (16:124)

#### THE RISE OF THE OPPOSITION

In 1981, an organization called Fuerza Democratica

Nicaraguense (Nicaraguan Democratic Force), Spanish acronym, FDN was formed in Honduras. It was comprised of many former Somoza National Guardsmen who were in exile in various Central American Countries. By 1982, the group was well trained and conducting operations inside Nicaragua. The insurgents became known as the Contras, which is Spanish for against, because they were against the Sandinistas. This band grew to over 12,000 and began receiving financial and political support from the Reagan Administration. The Contras have operated in the northern border area close to Honduras. (5:265-269)

There were some other liberation movements struggling against the Sandinista regime. One was led by Eden Pastora, a former member of the Sandinista Directorate. Known by its Spanish acronym ARDE the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance never aligned with the FDN. ARDE refused help from the United States and conducted operations in the Southern portion of Nicaragua. Unable to gain support elsewhere the group has disbanded, and is exiled in Costa Rica. (15:263-264)

#### THE CIVIL WAR IN EL SALVADOR

"The traditional pattern of Salvadoran society- political domination by military dictatorship and economic control by an oligarchy- broke down in the late 1970's. The country faced a simultaneous tri sided struggle among the ruling groups,

democratic reformers, and Marxist revolutionaries." (13:319) El Salvador, the smallest country in Central America with 8,260 square miles, is one of the most densely populated with 618 per square mile, comprising a total populace of 5,105,000. In addition the population continues to grow at a high 2.5% per annum. (9:1,2,3,)

The civil War in El Salvador had raged for seven years, more than 70,000 citizens have died and thousands more have been displaced. In addition to this suffering, an earthquake in October 1986 left 31,000 homeless and caused billion of dollars in damages. Attempts to revive the economy have been hampered by the war effort, economic sabotage by the guerillas, a 37% inflation rate and severe drought. The civil war goes on despite increased economic and military aid from the United States, which has totaled 2.5. billion dollars since 1979. (2:413)

The Farabundo Marti Liberation Front, known by its Spanish acronym FMLN has two sources of support; the radicalized religious activists and the Salvadoran Communist party. The Catholic groups are rooted in Christian base communities and their ideas grew out of liberation theology. (13:320) In addition to the communists, some radical Social Democrats, Socialists and Christian Democrats have joined the FMLN cause. Such is the case of Guillermo Ungo, former vice president elect who became the leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) that is now allied with the FMLN. Today, the FDR-FMLN is the

umbrella organization for over 20 leftist organizations. The FDR acts as the political wing of the group, while the FMLN handles military operations. The group's strength is estimated to be at 8,000 insurgents, with a much larger network of reserves and sympathizers. (13:321,321)

The FMLN almost achieved victory in 1981, but support from the US saved the government of El Salvador. "As the war escalated, the guerrillas consolidated their system, but their popular sympathy diminished. They consistently over estimated their military strength and the masses' readiness to support them. Their onslaught on the economy destroyed factories, stores, automobiles and all kinds of public utilities, causing widespread disruption, unemployment and misery." (13:323)

The Reagan Administration has strongly supported the government of Jose Napoleon Durarte, who was the first freely elected President of El Salvador who was able to assume office. The strategy had first been to prevent a military victory by the FMLN. To that end, the El Sal Armed Forces have been modernized. A considerable counter insurgency capability has been added to the Air Force. Two C 47 AFSP "Spooky" gunships, eight A-37B dragonflys for close air support, thirty six UH-1N helicopters and four Hughes 500MD attack helicopters have been added to the inventory. The fighter capability of the El Sal Air Force remains in eight aging Ouragan's, most of which are non operational. The army has been built up to 38,650 making it

second only to Nicaragua. (20:100)

As a result of the build up, the initiative has been taken away from the FMLN. On the other hand, the government has not been able to deliver a knock out punch. Thus, a stalemate has occurred, and there appears to be no political or military solution in sight. One definite outcome of the civil war has been mass migration of refugees to Honduras. The 1969 war between Honduras and El Salvador was essentially over the issue of Salvadoran migration. Known as the Soccer war, it really had nothing to do with the two republics competition in the Soccer World Cup. Even before the civil war, many Salvadorans illegally moved to Honduras. This was caused by the shortage of arable land in El Salvador. Honduras, at first, did not attempt to stop this migration. However, as her economy faltered, resentment against the illegal aliens intensified. In addition, the border between the two countries has been in dispute since the break up of the United Provinces of Central America. Honduras claims that El Salvador had, and still has, expansionist designs on Honduran Territory. This includes securing additional land for her expanding population and securing a port on the Caribbean Sea. El Salvador claims that the war was needed to protect the mistreatment of its citizens. In any event, the five day war has left the two countries angry and mistrustful. (1:1-20)

## IMPACT ON HONDURAN NATIONAL SECURITY

Honduras primary national security concern is still with El Salvador. After the 1969 war, the governments of both countries agreed to have demilitarized zones around border areas that were not clearly demarcated. This agreement, later supported by the Organization of American States, provides that armed troops not be within five kilometers of any disputed area. Despite this agreement, a considerable number of Salvadoran citizens continue to enter Honduras. In addition, the population growth rate of El Salvador, coupled with her internal problems, means this migration pressure will continue for the foreseeable future. The problem will become more acute as Honduras becomes unable to absorb the influx. Although it appears that Honduras has plenty of space this is not the case. The amount of arable land in Honduras is rapidly diminishing and her own population growth rate is among the highest in the Americas. (21:1-10)

The growth of the Salvadoran Armed force is another challenge for Honduras. At the present time, these force are being used to subdue the internal opposition. However, should the civil war end through either negotiation or government victory, the military balance of power may have been tipped in El Salvador's favor. Another scenario could be the use of an external threat to unify the El Salvador populace. In this case El Salvador might start a war with Honduras to direct attention away from her

internal problems and to unify the nation. While this is unlikely, the fact remains that El Salvador has not given up on a route to the Atlantic.

The relationship with Nicaragua is Honduras second greatest national security concern. Although traditionally the two countries have had friendly relations, the change brought on by the Sandinistas alarm Honduras. The build up of military forces can not be matched in numbers and dollars by Honduras. While the Sandinistas claim these forces are needed to stop the Contras and to prevent an invasion by the United States, they have also vowed to support revolutionary movements throughout the region. While there are currently no active insurgent groups in Honduras, it appears that radical elements could count on Sandinista support. In the past nine years Nicaraguan forces have violated the Honduran border. While these incursions have been limited in scope a more determined effort by the entire Sandinista army could not be stopped without outside help.

Central America's socio-political crisis, has caused Honduras' economy tremendous harm. First, the media has caused an impression throughout the world that Central America is one country. Thus the televised scenes of armed violence are taken to involve Honduras. As a result, investors consider it a high risk. In addition the specter of Communist victory in Nicaragua and El Salvador have caused internal capital flight from the other countries of Central America. People with cash are hedging

their bets that Honduras may be next on the communist hit list. Thus, money is safely deposited in US and European Banks.

Another economic impact has been the increase in defense spending. The population of Honduras feels that funding should go to medical services, road building, education and other human services. Thus, resentment is building towards the military as additional funds are diverted to meet the military threats to the country.

The refugee problem is another economic drain on Honduras. Along the border with Nicaragua, Honduran peasants fled their homes for fear of cross border attacks from the Sandinistas who were pursuing the Contras. This situation caused one of the most productive coffee areas to be abandoned.

It is a paradox that no matter what the outcome of the various liberation movements, Honduran national security could be adversely affected. For example, if the FSLN wins the war in El Salvador, they will most likely, build a government on the Cuban and Sandinista model. If History repeats itself, this would mean an immediate and dramatic military build up of both regular and militia forces. It can be assumed that moderate groups will be forced to leave the country as will the more right wing elements. Honduras would then be the natural place for another contra group to form.

On the other hand, if the Durate government wins the war the consequences may not be as welcomed as they are now. Honduras



would like to have the established government prevail over the revolutionary forces. But a key question is what will the El Salvadoran government do with its expanded forces once the rebel threat is removed. Honduras is leary that these forces will be used to settle the long standing border dispute.

If the Contras win the war in Nicaragua it would appear that all but the Sandinistas would be happy. However, it is likely that the Sandinistas would regroup and start another insurgent movement from Honduras. If the Contras lose, they have no where to go but Honduras. In addition to this problem, Nicaragua would have not only the largest military forces in Central America, but no opposition. These forces would then be free for foreign ventures.

Honduras is very concerned that insurgent group in Central America not end up in her territory. To prepare for this, Honduras in November, 1987, proposed to the Organization of American States, OAS, that a joint committee be formed to disarm any insurgents who enter Honduras. In addition, a request was made for an international security commission which would inform the OAS of any violations, by regular or irregular forces who enter Honduras. Another proposal is for reception and repatriation of unarmed personnel who turn themselves in. Honduras hopes that these measure can prevent the intrusion of defeated armed insurgents, who they fear would rapidly join or form criminal gangs in Honduras.

Yet another concern to Honduran National Security, is that this regional conflict has escalated to the Super Powers, the US and USSR. Neither one of these powers have the best interests of Central America as their prime concern. The United States wants to stop the spread of Communism, not because it is bad for Central Americans, but because it is a risk to US National Security if countries in this region become allied with the Soviet Bloc. As Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, said before the House of Representatives vote on Contra aid: "If the Sandinista Regime is allowed to consolidate, Nicaragua, would become a second Cuba and a strategically located Communist beach head on the mainland of Central America. It provides another base for Soviet intelligence and operational activities against the United States and greatly enhances the Soviet capability to conduct surveillance along our West Coast. Air bases and port facilities would permit Soviet bombers, ships and submarines rapid access to the Continental US and the Panama Canal."

It is feared that the US and USSR will become directly involved in the Central American conflict. In such an instance, the concerns of Honduras and the other states would be ignored. It is likely that the super powers would violate the sovereignty of the various states.

At their inception, the liberation movements in Central America had good reasons to exist. In Nicaragua the purpose was to end the corruption established during Somoza's and to

eliminate the Somoza dynasty. The movement was supported by the people of Nicaragua and had the support of Latin America and the World. In El Salvador the situation was similar in many respects. The government was corrupt and the military protected a elite group of families. Today, these reasons are no longer valid. Somoza is gone as are the fourteen ruling families in El Salvador. Yet the peoples of both countries continue to suffer, perhaps more so than under the dictators.

The effects of the wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua continue to seriously affect Honduras. Over two hundred and fifty thousand people have fled to Honduras. These people have no place to live, no work and have become an additional social problem for a country that has enough of its own problems. The possibility of a super power confrontation could result in violation of Honduran sovereignty. Because of the escalation in violence and the potential outcome, Honduras is seeking the help of the OAS to relocate refugees and to disarm insurgent groups.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Honduras must reaccess its military strength in the context of the current situation. Before the military escalation started Honduras was militarily more powerful than the rest of the Nations of Central America. For example the Air Force, although small, was modern and well trained. The Army was comparable in

size, equipment and training to those of El Salvador and Guatemala and was larger than the Somoza National Guard. In the view of Honduras, the balance of power in 1979 was equal and there were no significant threats to Honduran National Security. As this paper has pointed out, this balance has been upset.

Honduras must begin a program of modernization and the major portion of this program should be devoted to improving the Air Force. In the past Honduras has had the premier Air Force in the region. This reputation, which is based on the HAF's performance in the 1969 war, has deterred aggression in the past. Today the Honduran Air Force does not have sufficient equipment to guarantee air superiority in a future conflict. To counter the Sandinista build up in armor and attack helicopters the Honduran Air Force needs A-10 Thunderbolts. Twelve F-5E Tiger fighters are currently being delivered to Honduras to replace the aging Super Mistere. While this represents an improvement, additional numbers are needed. In addition, the F-5 will not meet requirements over the next twenty years. Thus Honduras should begin negotiations for a follow on fighter to the F-5. The F-16 Falcon would be the optimum solution, but is probably too expensive. A fine alternative would be the A-7 Corsair. Currently Honduras has no attack helicopters and does not have sufficient helicopter transport capabilities. For instance, US helicopters were needed to ferry Honduran troops during recent border clashes with the Sandinistas. Helicopter capability must

be upgraded. Additional Bell 412's should be procured to augment the twelve in the current inventory. If the US makes Cobra Helicopters available to to others, Honduras should negotiate to obtain them at the earliest possible date. Without helicopter modernization, Honduras lacks the capability to support its ground forces. This is particularly critical in countering the MI 24 Hinds of the Sandinistas. Until helicopter modernization occurs, Honduras must have plans to destroy the Hinds, before they can be used in battle. Honduras does not have the road system that would enable rapid movement of troops, in fact this lack of mobility is a serious shortcoming. To overcome this impediment, the airlift potential must be improved. The Air Force needs ten DHC 5 Buffalos or the Spanish C 212 aviocar.

The Honduran Army likewise must be modernized. Because Honduras has no intentions of invading her neighbors, there is no need to significantly increase Army personnel strength. However, the Army must be prepared to stop attacks from both Nicaragua and El Salvador. Key to stopping a Sandinista advance are anti tank weapons. In addition, ground to air capability must be upgraded. Stinger missiles are needed to negate Sandinista close air support.

The intelligence capability of Honduras must be upgraded. Until recently, there were no Radar facilities that could detect intrusions of Honduran Air Space. These new radars must be carefully maintained and updated as required. Photo

reconnaissance is not available at the present time, and probably is not affordable. Honduras must seek the assistance of the United States to provide timely warning via photo and other high tech reconnaissance.

The Honduran command and control system is also in need of improvement. Forward Air Control will be critical in any future battle. In 1969 the Air Force could not communicate with ground forces at all! Although there have been improvements they have not been sufficient. Radios in all aircraft must be able to operate with Army radios. Training is required to insure that ground controllers and forward air controllers can operate effectively.

The Government of Honduras, faithful to its humanitarian tradition, has gathered within its borders thousands of Nicaraguan and Salvadoran refugees who since 1978 have sought protection. More recently, in the same spirit of compassion, Honduras has given shelter to hundreds of Guatemalan refugees. Today the United Nations High Commission for refugees has registered 100,000 refugees in Honduras and estimates that there are an additional 300,000 not registered. The repercussions from the refugee program have had serious consequences for Honduras, especially in the economic, political, migratory and security fields. The refugee camps are supported artificially by donations and produce very little for the economy. Products from the camps are generally over priced. In addition, the refugees

create problems of deforestation and resource depletion in the areas where they are located. Politically they cause innumerable inconvenience since their ideological beliefs are contrary to those of their home governments. Consequently, their behavior affects Honduras relationship with its neighbors. Honduras should request help from the Organization of American States, to relocate a portion of the refugees among the member states.

Honduras should continue to press for peace with El Salvador and settle border delineations. This should be accomplished by pressing for approval by both parties, to the General Treaty of Peace signed in October 1980. This treaty provided for direct negotiations until June 1987. Since these failed the treaty provides for the case to be decided in the International Court of Justice.

Honduras should continue to improve its relationship with Nicaragua and El Salvador to obtain a better understanding. The best method is to support the peace plan proposed by President Oscar Arias, of Costa Rica.

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